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Heart to Heart ... with Hardisty



Though Indiana experienced one of the hottest on record, August was still packed with activity. A lot of this activity took place at the Indiana State Fair, and I was able to participate in many of the events.



At the onset of the Fair, I attended the Pork Producers breakfast and had the opportunity to speak to Governor Mitch Daniels and Lt. Governor Becky Skillman about our conservation efforts. I also met Purdue University's new and first female President, France A. Cordova.



The Fair provided outreach opportunities for NRCS and our conservation partners to showcase conservation practices at the Pathway to Water Quality. I am very excited about the future plans for the Pathway to be included in a year-round education project. Working shifts at the Pathway gave me a great opportunity to talk with our employees, partners and landowners. Also, I was proud to work the NRCS exhibit area at the Our Land Pavilion where fairgoers experienced our upgraded watershed model, which clearly depicted the watershed boundaries. This enhancement to the model made a huge difference in its impact to visitors.



Meeting the Prairie Farmer Master Farmers, congratulating the River Friendly Farmers; honoring Dr. Dave Petritz, Director of Purdue Cooperative Extension, at his retirement celebration; and attending Lt. Governor Skillman's Ag Forum were highlights of the Fair for me. Now we can look forward to next year!



Jane E. Hardisty

*** * * * Employee Spotlight * * * ***

Chris Smith
Civil Engineering Technician, Lebanon

Q: Chris, will you please give us some personal history so we can get to know you better?

A: Sure, I was born and raised in Anderson, IN. While in college I worked for two summers on a cow/calf guest ranch in western Colorado and a year and a half as a student worker with the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) at the National Soil Erosion Research Lab. I graduated from Purdue University in 2001 with a B.S. in Natural Resources and Environmental Science specializing in soils. After graduation I worked in a geotechnical soils testing lab in Indianapolis for a year and a half, then hired on full time with the USDA ARS in Lafayette as a Biological Science Research Technician (Soils).

Q: When did you begin working for NRCS?

A: I began working for NRCS in November 2006 as a Civil Engineering Technician for the Lebanon Technical Team.

Q: Coming to the agency from the Agricultural Research Service, how did your job there prepare you for your work on the technical team?

A: My work with the ARS helped me to get a good grasp on technology. We used survey grade Trimble GPS and dumpy levels alike. I was able to use many types of computer software from mapping, graphing and statistical software to software for analytical laboratory instruments. A lot of the technology we used wasn't commercially available, so we had to make it ourselves (flumes, research devices, circuit boards, etc.).

Q: How do the new technology tools help you with your job in the field?

A: The new technology helps to speed the survey and

design process along. For instance, many times lately we have been called to layout a waterway through a standing corn field. If there are turns in the waterway you would have to set up the instrument many times, however with the Leica GPS we can stakeout points very easily.



Q: Tell us about your farm in Montgomery County.

A: My wife and I have a small horse farm in Montgomery County. It is mainly a hobby farm for our own entertainment. We have five horses (three Quarter Horses and two Paints), four and a half acres of pasture under management intensive grazing (which is working out quite well, even with the dry summer), a small barn, and an ever growing outdoor arena.

Q: Do you have hobbies or special interests that take up your spare time?

A: My wife and I train horses, start colts, and compete in team penning cattle. I also spend a good deal of time deer hunting every year...mostly during archery season. I am even going elk hunting the last week of August.

Also, I serve on the board of directors for an equine ministry aimed to help disadvantaged inner-city youth.

Q: Please tell us more about this group.

A: The Haven of Hope Equine Ministry, located in Montgomery and Parke Counties, is a non-profit 501c3 that was started two years ago. We usually start our events with horsemanship lessons in groups of two or three and then present a Gospel message. The event ends with an all-you-can-eat meal.

We target mostly inner city youth by working through Indianapolis churches and groups such as Wheeler Mission. In September we will be putting on an event with a Montgomery mentoring group in which all of the kids have at least one parent in prison. We also conduct some events each year with the Ladoga Girls Home, a juvenile detention center. Most of these girls come from Indianapolis, Chicago, Ft. Wayne, and Louisville.

Hoosier Happenings

State Fair was the Hot Spot!

Though the temperatures remained in the 90's during 11 days of the 12-day event, the Indiana State Fair drew more than 760,000 folks. Many of the fairgoers found shelter from the heat in the oasis of Pathway to Water Quality (PWQ) and in the air-conditioned Our Land Pavilion (OLP).

In its 14th year, PWQ saw 39,934 visitors this year. Not only did they learn about conservation practices for clean water, they were offered a cool drink of water. Partnership volunteers from NRCS, SWCD, ISDA, IASWCD, and SSCB worked at the various stations, as well as Earth Team Volunteers, Master Gardeners, a Master Naturalist, IN American Water employees, and five IUPUI students—totaling 134 volunteers.

The upgraded watershed model at OLP was a hit with all ages. The watershed boundary was visually illuminated as visitors pressed the button for a major Indiana river. This enhancement of showing the river and the watershed boundary simultaneously was a great help to the 39 NRCS employees working the booth this year...educating children and adults as well. Visitors who interacted with the volunteer were rewarded with a free water bottle.

Thank you to all State Fair volunteers who worked at OLP and PWQ this year. Great job!

RC&D Sponsors Two Watershed Projects

The Historic Hoosier Hills RC&D is sponsoring two new watershed projects, thanks to grants totaling \$530,120 and assistance from the conservation partners. The South Laughery Creek Watershed Project began in April and includes Ripley, Switzerland, Dearborn, and Ohio counties, covering 112,000 acres. Initiated to assist landowners within the watershed in applying conservation practices, this venture will be a key to improving water quality in Laughery Creek and its tributaries. Watershed coordinator for this project is NRCS retiree Duane Drockelman. Tim Schwipps, district conservationist for Ripley County, is also involved. The IDEM grant enables landowners to receive technical assistance and a cost share of 75 percent (up to \$10,000). Landowners are encouraged to apply for additional cost share assistance through USDA Farm Bill programs, such as EQIP.

The second project, Central Muscatatuck Watershed Project, covers 165,000 acres in Ripley, Jefferson, Scott and Jennings counties. This watershed management study was implemented due to the high number of impaired streams in the watershed. The study is to be completed in 2009 with the expectation of identifying non point sources of contamination within the watershed and implementing solutions during the second phase of the project.

Congrats, Jim!

According to the Soil & Water Conservation Society (SWCS), the Harry and Kay Scholl Excellence in Conservation Award recognizes individuals who provide technical assistance, demonstrate effectiveness and creativity in conservation planning, and assist with plan application. In July, this year's award was presented to a Hoosier at the National SWCS Conference in Tampa, FL. Jim Lake, District Support Specialist for the Indiana State Department of Agriculture's Division of Soil Conservation, received this prestigious award. Jim has made great contributions to the Indiana Conservation Partnership in assisting the implementation of significant conservation initiatives. Many refer to Jim as a *Master Conservationist* for his efforts.—SWCS Conservogram



Indiana Employee Makes National Team

NRCS at National Headquarters reviewed over 100 applications from employees desiring to serve on the National Business Process Team, with four applicants from Indiana's NE Area. After completing the competitive selection process, Indiana's own Darrell Brown was selected to serve on the team. Darrell will meet with other team members on September 11-20, 2007 as they begin their task of improving the NRCS delivery of conservation planning, application, and financial assistance. Congratulations, Darrell!

Oil Sludge Pit Restored to Agriculture

State Conservationist Jane Hardisty attended a field day on June 8th in Westphalia, Indiana. The event marked the successful cleanup of an historic abandoned oil sludge pit and the return of the acreage to agriculture. The Southwest Indiana Brine Coalition and the Four Rivers RC&D utilized funding from EPA/IDEM and DNR grants to accomplish the first remediation project of an oil or gas pit in Indiana. They also gained support from the Indiana Oil & Gas Association's Environmental Advisory Board.

Congressman Views Conservation Practices in St. Joseph County

NRCS and the St. Joseph SWCD Board hosted Congressman Joe Donnelly on a farm tour on August 8 that showcased conservation practices in the field. The Congressman

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—Special Emphasis—

**Hispanic Heritage Month
September 15-October 15**

Americans will celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month, September 15 to October 15, with this year's theme, "Hispanic Americans: Making a Positive Impact on American Society."

In September 1968 Congress authorized President Lyndon B. Johnson to proclaim National Hispanic Heritage Week, but the observance was expanded in 1988 to a month long celebration (September 15-October 15). During the Hispanic Heritage Month, Americans recognize and celebrate the culture and traditions of U.S. residents who trace their roots to Spain, Mexico, Venezuela, and the Spanish-speaking nations of Central America, South America and the Caribbean.

September 15th was chosen as the starting point for the celebration because it is the anniversary of independence of five Latin American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua. In addition, Mexico and Chile celebrate their independence days on September 16 and 18, respectively.

During the Nation Hispanic Heritage Month, let's all celebrate and honor Hispanic traditions and ancestry. Let us also recognize the contributions that Hispanic Americans have made and are making to our country, as well as their positive influence on the American society.

Contact: Ignacio Avila, Hispanic Emphasis Program Manager, at ignacio.avila@in.usda.gov

Hoosiers Happenings (cont.)

learned about the purpose and outcome of various practices, and which Farm Bill programs support them. The hosts also took the opportunity to explain the role of the SWCD and the positive impact of locally-led conservation.



Pictured above left to right: Landowner and St. Joseph SWCD Chairman John Doods, Congressman Joe Donnelly, Area Conservationist Kimberly Neumann, District Conservationist Deb Knepp.

Water & Wildlife Survive Drought

With 100+ degrees, the Spencer County SWCD and conservation partners braved the elements to sponsor a Wetland Field Day on August 7th where 54 attended. The Giles' Wetland Restoration Program (WRP) site in Spencer County was constructed and restored in 2006. Among the presenters was former NRCS employee Dave Drew who spoke on wetland determinations. District Conservationist Rita Shaus was pleased to showcase the WRP site and said, "We were in a severe drought, but still had water and wildlife at this site." While touring the wetland, attendees saw a host of birds, bats, frogs and dragonflies, but not one mosquito!

PARTNERSHIP LINKS

Indiana Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts, *Weekly Updates*:
<http://www.iaswcd.org/WeeklyUpdatesJan07.htm>

ISDA, Division of Soil Conservation
<http://www.in.gov/isda/soil/>

Purdue University - www.purdue.edu

Indiana Conservation Partnership Strategic Plan Information
<http://www.in.gov/isda/soil/icp/index.html>

PERSONNEL UPDATE

Selections:

Brian Ingmire, Resource Management Specialist, SE Area Office, effective 8-5-2007
Clint Harrison, District Conservationist, Brookville Field Office, effective 8-19-2007
Joe Williams, District Conservationist, Washington Field Office, effective 8-19-2007
Susan Meadows, RC&D Coordinator, Sycamore Trails RC&D, effective 8-19-2007
Tony Branam, District Conservationist, Franklin Field Office, effective 9-2-2007
Chris Downing, District Conservationist, Brownstown Field Office, effective 9-2-2007
Tyler Martindale, Agricultural Engineer, SE Area Office, effective 9-2-2007
Daniel Davis, District Conservationist, Monticello Field Office, effective 9-30-2007

Retirement:

Marcia Droege, Soil Conservation Technician, Mount Vernon Field Office, effective 7-10-2007
Don Weaver, District Conservationist, Richmond Field Office, effective 08-03-2007

Resignations:

Paula Baty, Agricultural Engineer, Paoli Field Office, effective 7-31-2007
Marc Roberts, Soil Conservationist, Knox Field Office, effective 8-24-2007

Featured Website— LANDCARE

<http://landcare.nrcs.usda.gov/>

A four person NRCS office in Des Moines, Iowa makes a big impact on conservation across the United States. The national Earth Team Volunteer and LANDCARE office provides information and manages the volunteers that many local offices use to further conservation work. The LANDCARE office keeps inventory and processes orders for NRCS publications, forms and displays for NRCS employees and the general public. Orders may be placed by calling 1-888-LANDCARE or by visiting their website. Staff members shown here are (L-R) Bonnie Allely, Volunteer Liaison; Alan Benge, Program Assistant; Michele Eginore, Earth Team Volunteer Coordinator; and Venessa Alvarado, Office Assistant.



Mark Your Calendar

September

09/01/07	Forest, Fish and Wildlife Management Field Day, Pinney-Purdue Ag Center, near Valparaiso. Contact: Northwest Territory RC&D at 219-462-7515, ext. 117
09/03/07	LABOR DAY HOLIDAY

September (cont.)

- 09/05/07 Forage Management Workshop, Purdue Crop Diagnostic Training and Research Center, W. Lafayette. Contact: Keith Johnson at johnsonk@purdue.edu or call 765-494-4800
- 09/06/07 Restoration of White Lick Creek...Streambank Stabilization and Restoration Workshop, Plainfield Parks & Recreation Aquatic Center, Plainfield. Contact Cathy Deal at 317-290-3250.
- 09/08/07 Forest, Fish and Wildlife Management Field Day, Davis Purdue University Ag Center, Farmland, IN. Contact: Karen Schneider at karenann@purdue.edu or call 765-494-3583
- 09/11/07 State Soil Conservation Board Meeting, Indianapolis
- 09/25/07 State Technical Committee Meeting, Indianapolis
- 09/26/07 SW Area Meeting
- 09/27/07 NE Area Meeting

October

- 10/02-05/07 National Ag Air Quality Task Force, Indianapolis
- 10/08/07 **COLUMBUS DAY HOLIDAY**
- 10/10/07 SE Area Meeting
- 10/11/07 NW Area Meeting
- 10/24-27/07 National FFA Convention, Indianapolis
- 10/31/07 SW Area Meeting

November

- 11/13-15/07 CNMP Provider's Course, The Centre at 601 Main St., Bluffton, OH. Contact Greg LaBarge, Ohio State University Extension at labarge.1@osu.edu or call 419-337-9210

Note: For a listing of Natural Resources Education Center workshops, go to www.in.gov/dnr/nrec

Helping People Help the Land